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THE BOOK OF MORMON.

HAVING in our last number of the STAR given as our opening article, a piece entitled "A Voice of Warning," explanatory of the introductory principles of Christianity, or, in other words, the law of adoption, by which the alienated sons and daughters of men may become the legitimate children of God, heirs of him and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; we now come to treat of other principles and truths immediately connected with the great work of God in the last days.

On the declaration of the first principles of the gospel by the servants of the Lord, many have been compelled to acknowledge their truth, and that they were certainly in perfect accordance with the written word of God; but at the same time have justly remarked, that in reference to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there were other principles and peculiarities of belief and doctrine still in the back ground, and especially the fact of believing in another book, held by them in equal estimation with the acknowledged scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, on which subject they were desirous of obtaining some understanding. This is perfectly right, and we have always felt a pleasure, as much as in us lies of satisfactorily explaining this subject. The object, therefore, of the present article will be to effect this purpose, not by entering into every minutia of argument that might be adduced, but on broad and general principles, yet such as to give satisfaction to those who are sincerely in search of truth.

We would introduce our remarks by endeavouring to remove a very common prejudice amongst the professors of modern Christianity respecting the scriptures, comprising the Old and New Testaments, being the only word that God through the instrumentality of his servants ever gave for the guidance and direction of the human family with regard to their eternal salvation. If individuals verily believe the scriptures to be works of truth, they must necessarily believe that other works than what are therein compiled have existed, inasmuch as the Bible and New Testament bear testimony of the same. Without enumerating the whole of what we know once were extant, we shall refer to a few to establish this important fact. For instance, in the epistle of Jude, we find a reference to the book of the Prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, and also a quotation therefrom, which necessarily proves the existence of such a work and its authenticity. We discover also, from the same author (Jude) that he had formerly written an epistle to the Saints on the common salvation which most undoubtedly would be as orthodox and as scriptural as that which he was then inditing.

The apostle Paul likewise wrote another epistle to the Corinthians of which we have no copy, but most certainly every admirer of the talent of the great apostle of the Gentiles would be glad of its discovery (1st Corinthians v. 9). We will also enumerate a few others for the satisfaction of those who before time may have staggered at the idea:—Book of Jasher—*Joshua* c. x. v. 13. Book of the Acts of Solomon—*1 Kings* c. xi. v. 41. Book of Nathan the prophet, Book of Gad the seer—*1 Chron.* c. xxix. v. 29. Book of Nathan the prophet, Book of the Prophecy of Ahijah, Book of the Visions of Iddo the seer—*2 Chron.* c. ix. v. 29. Book of Shemaiah the prophet, Book of Iddo the seer—*2 Chron.* c. xii. v. 15. "Written in the Story of the prophet Iddo"—*2 Chron.* c. xiii. v. 22.

And in addition to these we might refer to the various prophecies that were delivered for the guidance and direction of the Saints in the days of the apostles, which, certainly, as being delivered under the influence of the spirit of God, would be as much scripture or divine truth as any portion we have left on record. So much then for the possibility of other books written by the servants of the Lord, or, in popular phraseology, inspired men, being in existence, as well as the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

We shall now enter upon our apology for the claims which the Book of Mormon has upon the credence of the world at large; and in the first place we will state what, as a people, we believe the Book of Mormon to be, which is neither more nor less than a history of God's dealings with the inhabitants of the western hemisphere, together with prophecies of the future, exactly similar to what the Bible is with regard to the Jewish family and the inhabitants of the eastern hemisphere. Having made this statement of our belief, let us now look at the plausibility and rationality of the matter.

We know that it is now some four hundred years since the American continent was discovered by Columbus, and that previously the eastern world (however it might be in very remote antiquity) had no knowledge of the existence of the same. Yet we find, and that beyond all question, by the almost unequalled ruins of mighty cities, that that continent was populated by a highly civilized and numerous people. Here then we would remark that the advent of the Messiah had transpired, that he had suffered, died, and made an atonement for the sins of the world. And is it by any means irrational to suppose that this great event, so important to the human family in all time, should be made known to that portion of them which populated the western world? It is just as reasonable to suppose that the coming of the Messiah, and the great work of redemption, should be communicated by the inspiration of prophets to foretell the same, or by the ministration of angels, as that such agencies should be employed for the same purpose in the east; and especially when we assert that America was populated by the seed of Abraham as well as the land of Judea. But as we wish to make no assertions without some effort to establish the same as facts, we shall endeavour to illustrate the subject by a reference to scripture truths.

We read in the 48th chapter of Genesis, that Joseph took his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to Israel, his father, that they might receive his blessing; in connexion with which he prophesied that they should become a multitude of nations in the midst of the earth. Now, in the understanding of scripture language, we are at all times desirous of exercising simplicity, and of wresting nothing from its simple and original meaning. For instance, the term nations we wish to understand it in its true and simple meaning, as large bodies of people, living together as a portion of the human family, yet as distinct from other portions similarly formed and associated together in like manner.

And with regard to the locality of these nations, it was foretold that it should be in the midst of the earth. We ask then the question, where was the prophecy pronounced? We answer in the land of Egypt, which taking the longitude of Grand Cairo, we find to be 30 degrees east of the meridian of London, and tracing our course east or west 180 degrees, we find ourselves in the midst of the earth, at the termination of the Stony Mountains of North America, near Cook's Inlet. In connexion with this we would also refer to the blessing conferred upon Joseph in the 49th chapter of the same book, where he is told that the blessings of his father, Israel, prevailed or extended beyond the blessings of Jacob's progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. Now we are aware of what the blessing of inheritance conferred upon the progenitors of Jacob, Abraham, and Isaac was, namely, the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; but it is intimated that Joseph was a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall; or, in other words, extended beyond the boundary that confined, as it were, the other branches of the house of Israel. As a further illustration of the greatness of the blessing of Joseph, we would refer to the prophecy and blessing of Moses, pronounced upon the seed of Joseph, as recorded in the 33rd chapter of Deuteronomy, which is, and only can be, illustrated by the extent, abundant fertility, and richness of the western world.

We here then make the assertion that the aboriginies of North America are descendants of the family of Joseph—that they are the multitude of nations prophesied of as hereafter to inhabit the midst of the earth—and that their forefathers came from Jerusalem some six hundred years before Christ, and colonized the land. But we would here remark, that before bringing additional evidence to establish the same, that the continent of America was previously colonized, immediately after the confusion of tongues at Babel, by a race of people who afterwards became extinct by the wars and calamities resulting from the corruptions and wickedness of the people. The history of this race is given by the prophet Ether in the Book of Mormon, who lived to witness their entire destruction, and afterwards deposited his record in the earth, it being subsequently found by the colony of Israelites who came from Jerusalem as before referred to.

These asserted facts are strongly corroborated by the researches and investigations of travellers of modern times, who from the traditions extant amongst the Indian tribes, trace the history, not only of their fathers, but of a mighty race of people who occupied the land before them.

Were it not for extending the limits of the present article beyond the space allowed, numerous extracts might be made of American traditions illustrative of the confusion of language at Babel, and of the colonization of that country by some that were dispersed on that memorable occasion. But this will not be called in question when we find the scriptures asserting that the “Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of *all* the earth.”

Many modern writers, convinced of the Israelitish origin of the American Indian tribes, have written much to establish the theory that they are the descendants of the ten tribes that were carried away captive by Salmanazer, about seven hundred and twenty years before Christ. The revelations of the Lord, however, in the last days, have been instrumental in giving us a more lucid and satisfactory history of their origin. We quote the following from a chapter on their origin by O. Colton, published by him in London, in the year 1833:—“They assert that a book was once in possession of their ancestors, and along with this recognition they have traditions that the Great Spirit used to foretell to their fathers future events; that he controlled nature in their favour; that angels once talked with them; that all the Indian tribes descended from *one* man, who had *twelve* sons. That this man was a notable and renowned prince, having great dominion; and that the Indians, his posterity, will yet recover the same dominion and influence. They believe by tradition, that the spirit of prophecy and of miraculous interposition, once enjoyed by their ancestors, will yet be restored to them, and that they shall yet recover the *book*—all of which have been so long lost.”

“The lamb offered to make atonement for sin, was required by Moses to be ‘without spot and blemish.’ Although the Indians offer dogs, which are not white, yet the victims must have been well fed and the choicest. But on certain occasions, altogether the most solemn, supposed to be the times of burnt offering for atonement, the victim must not only be white, but a single coloured hair or a blemish of any sort would be sufficient to condemn it! Whence these religious and indomitable scruples? And all around the fire, while its blaze consumes the offering, and sends up to heaven the smoke of its incense, they sing and dance, and run the circle, crying with one united simultaneous voice, ee-ee-oo-oo-yeh-yeh-wah-wah. And then with one utterance of each syllable, ee-oo-yeh-vah. Also; yah-ho-he-wah, with a most powerful aspirate, when that element comes in. And who does not see in these examples the Hebrew sacred name—*Ja-ho-vah*? They have also the Hebrew *A-loh-heem* in substantial forms, applicable to the Great Spirit. In this dance their feet kept time with the deliberate enunciation of each syllable, making a solemn pause between. Nearly the exact forms of the original combination of the alphabetic elements of the Hebrew names of God, may be distinctly recognized in the religious solemnities of very many of the American tribes. In their sacred songs *Ha-le-lu-yah* is often heard as perfectly as in any christian choir.”

“They have their various feasts of the first fruits of harvest, &c.—all religious solemnities. They have a sort of daily sacrifice, which certainly is very simple and cheap in its way; namely, that the squaw, when she cooks her meat, will cut off and throw a piece of the fat into the fire very religiously, and watches the incense

with devout attention, until the offering is consumed, and the blaze expires." So it is in smoking the calumet (the pipe of peace) the first exhalation of the fumes of the tobacco are sent upwards as an offering to the Great Spirit.

The existence of prophets amongst them is also a remarkable fact, whilst the power and authority of the same is fully recognized and exercised to a very great degree, as most of their most bloody wars have been instigated or suppressed by prophetic decisions and mandates.

They have also a sacred vessel, or *ark of the covenant*, which is employed on some occasions, and is regarded with the most religious veneration. But lest we should weary our readers, we will conclude narrating these evidences of the Israelitish origin of the Indians, by stating that they maintain the custom of the ancient Hebrews to the very iota: for the private avengement of private injuries—"an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and blood for blood." The nearest of kin is always expected to avenge the death of his relative.

Having given the foregoing evidences of the origin of the American tribes, we shall now endeavour to bring some scripture testimony relative to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and of the great events of which it was to be the precursor. In the first place we would remark that it is positively asserted in the word of God, that the Lord wrote expressly unto Ephraim as recorded in the prophet Hosea, 8th chapter and 12th verse—"I have written unto him the great things of my law, but they were accounted as a strange thing." Again, we have evidence that what was written for Ephraim, was to come forth by divine interposition immediately previous to the gathering of Israel, and the full establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth. In the 37th chapter of Ezekiel we read of the prophet being commanded to write upon two sticks, one for Judah and the children of Israel his companions; and the other for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions. He was then commanded to join them one to another into one stick, and they should become one in his hand. And when the children of his people should speak unto him, and ask what was meant by them, he was to say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall become one in thine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes."

Whatever were the peculiarities of that to which the prophet had to attend, the fulfilment of the same was in the future, and was to be the immediate result of divine interposition, for it was the Lord God himself that was to be instrumental in putting the stick or writing of Joseph, which was in the hand of Ephraim, with the stick of Judah, and making them one before the face of the people.

But the Lord himself, after the union of the writings, further adds, "I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all, and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." Here is a beautiful propriety in the union of two testimonies thus coming together, to bear evidence of God's faithfulness unto his people, and preparing the way for his ancient Israel to be gathered and inherit the blessings so long withheld from them in consequence of their transgressions. The stick of Judah, or the Bible, has long borne a testimony among the nations of God's dealings with the children of men, when lo! comes forth the history of the western world, so long hid from the knowledge of the people of the east, to unite with the former, and be instrumental in conjunction of introducing the great purposes of God in the establishment of that kingdom which should never come to an end.

Again, we read in the 29th chapter of Isaiah, commencing at the 9th verse, of the condition of the religious world in the last days, previous to the introduction of the millennial era. The condition of the religious teachers of the day is described as a people that are blind and drunken through ignorance, as being covered with a spirit of slumber, and having no vision, their prophets and seers being covered, and the vision of all become as the words of a book that is sealed up, which they

deliver to one that can read, saying, read this I pray thee. Then shall he say, "I cannot, for it is sealed." And the book is given unto him that cannot read, saying, read this I pray thee. And he shall say, I cannot read.

Here is a beautiful exposition of the former declaration of the Lord, which we have quoted, that it should be by his own instrumentality that the stick of Joseph should be brought forth and placed with the stick of Judah. It is also manifest that the stick of Joseph should be in a language that was sealed or unknown to those to whom it should be presented, inasmuch as neither the learned nor unlearned could read the same; therefore the Lord declared that he himself would again do a marvellous work and a wonder, causing the wisdom of the wise men to perish, and the understanding of the prudent to be hid; and this it is evident was to be effected by the translation of the book, for we read that when it was yet but a little while ere Lebanon should be turned into Carmel, and Carmel should be counted as a forest, that in that day the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind see out of obscurity and out of darkness, so that the meek in the Lord should receive joy again, and the poor men rejoice in the holy one of Israel.

We rejoice to bear our humble testimony, that this has been literally fulfilled in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. A copy of a portion of the original characters were presented to a learned antiquary, who acknowledged his incapacity to read the same, in consequence of the language in which it was written being unknown, while he that was unlearned was equally incapable of interpreting it, until qualified so to do by the immediate gift of God.

It would here perhaps be interesting to the inquirer to know something of the origin of the Book of Mormon, for the authenticity of which we have been pleading. —The late martyred servant of the Lord, Joseph Smith, being much exercised in his mind on the subject of religion, when about the age of seventeen, and religious revivals, as they are termed, being the order of the day; yet being dissatisfied with the contradictory nature of the principles of the various religious bodies, he was induced to retire in secret, and making his supplications unto the Lord, ask him for that wisdom which he had promised to give liberally without upbraiding.

The result of his pleadings before the Lord, was the ministration of an angel of the Lord, communicating unto him what was necessary for him to know, and after repeated trials of his own weakness, preparing him to be instrumental in bringing forth the long hidden record of the aborigines of the American continent. The original of which consisting of fine plates, having the appearance of gold, and beautifully engraved in small characters, was discovered by him, deposited in a stone chest, near the summit of a hill anciently called Omnorah, but which is situated in Ontario county, township of Manchester, and state of New York, North America. He was informed by the angel of the Lord, that slander, falsehood, and all manner of persecution would be heaped upon him when the affair became known, but inasmuch as he was faithful, he would be enabled to accomplish the translation of the same, and be instrumental in establishing the kingdom of God again upon the earth for the last time. If any greater proof were wanting to corroborate the authenticity of this work, it certainly is to be found in the unmitigated persecution which the said servant of the Lord has had to endure from the day that the discovery of the records became known, unto the day on which he sealed his testimony with his blood.

It might be remarked by the objector, and apparently with some justice, why could not the servants of the Lord come forth in the last days proclaiming what are called the first principles of the gospel, and leave the subject and dissemination of the Book of Mormon alone, since it has been instrumental in calling forth so much persecution. But we would reply, that the Bible, the stick of Judah alone, was never intended to be instrumental in bringing about the purposes of the Most High; but it was to be by the union of the two witnesses that the great work was to be accomplished. We would wish here particularly to intimate, that in connexion with the divine communications manifested in bringing forth the book of Mormon, the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, so long lost, was restored, and men became qualified, by divine calling and ordination, to go forth to minister in holy things, and proclaim the fulness of the gospel unto the nations, that the end might come.

We might quote also in confirmation of the foregoing, from the 85th Psalm, that when the period should arrive that the Lord would bring back the captivity of Jacob, and turn away his wrath and the fierceness of his anger from them, that truth should spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven; that the Lord should give that which was good, causing the land to yield her increase; that righteousness should go before him (that is Jacob or Israel), and should set them in the way of his steps. Has not the above been literally fulfilled in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon? By truth we understand the word of God, for as the Saviour said, "Thy word is truth," while righteousness in the ministrations of angels has looked down from heaven in order to organize and set on foot that kingdom which should never come to an end.

And now we would address ourselves to our readers, and bear a faithful testimony to the foregoing remarks, in relation to the subject to which they refer.

All truth is harmonious, and we unhesitatingly assert, that if individuals will render obedience unto the requirements of the gospel of Christ, be administered to in the great law of adoption into the kingdom of God, by those who are legitimately called and ordained thereunto, they shall have the privilege of knowing truth for themselves, and inasmuch as the Book of Mormon, the stick of Joseph, is a portion of truth, they shall be able to bear a testimony of the same, and unflinchingly declare their knowledge of its divine origin. We have, then, endeavoured to lay before our readers, what we, as the professed church of Christ, organized in the year 1830, believe the Book of Mormon to be, we have given some evidence, we trust, of the origin of the people to whom it belonged, as well as scripture testimony to the same, and we might add much additional evidence, the result of the researches of various travellers in the regions described by the book itself as the localities of vast cities, that would furnish abundant testimony of the truth of its narrations.

It will be fully perceived, that we are not so limited in our ideas as to suppose that the Scriptures, as commonly received, are all the proof existing of the wisdom and goodness of God, but that on the contrary, while we know that the multitudes of tribes or nations in the western hemisphere are not descended from the ten tribes, but are of the house of Joseph, we also believe in the return of the ten tribes from the land where they are located, and that they also will come as a peaceable people, bringing their records with them, which shall add another testimony to the veracity and faithfulness of God.

In conclusion, we seriously exhort all who wish to arrive at a knowledge of what is truth, to follow the example of him who was the instrument in this great work, by asking God for wisdom in sincerity, and assuredly they shall obtain it. Amen.

EDITOR.

THE Gnostics.

BY MARMION SAVAGE, A. B.

The persecutions against the first professors of Christianity form not only the most melancholy, but the most extraordinary, events in the pages of history. It appears, on undoubted testimony, that they were men of the purest morals, and the most blameless lives; that they "submitted themselves quietly to all the ordinances of man, for the Lord's sake," and yielded none of the ordinary pretexts of which tyrants avail themselves to harass and oppress their subjects. The first persecution, indeed, under Nero, had some shadow of excuse assigned for it; but the history of that transaction is well known:—a capricious and sanguinary despot threw upon the simple professors of the gospel the odium of an atrocity he himself had perpetrated. At no subsequent period, however, was any specific charge brought against them; nor any reason assigned for the cruelty with which they were treated, than a general undefinable prejudice, which, it certainly appears, was very generally entertained by their fellow-subjects.

To account for this dislike, we must suppose some real or apparent cause which cannot be found in the conduct of the genuine followers of the cross: their

deportment was void of offence, both towards God and man, and could afford no reason for hatred or ill-will; but if we suppose that any body of men assumed their name and character who were not so unexceptionable in their conduct—if we imagine that vast numbers of apparent Christians were persons who cherished the most visionary fancies, and adopted the most impure practices, under the pretence and in the garb of Christianity, we can, then, be at no loss to conceive that the follies and faults of some might be attributed generally to all, and the church held accountable, in the estimation of the heathen world, for the crimes and aberrations of its pretended members.

That such a body of men did exist is undeniable; but the influence of their opinions and behaviour has not been, perhaps, duly appreciated. The sect called the Gnostics included a large number of professing Christians; and their doctrines were maintained by a succession of false apostles, who spread them so zealously abroad, in different parts of the Gentile world, that in many places, they were considered as the only professors of the religion of the cross, and their conduct the only rule by which its morality could be estimated.

The Gnostics have left no account of themselves: they are known to have written some books, but the stream of time has brought down none to the present day; their opinions, therefore, would have perished with themselves, many centuries ago, were they not preserved and embodied in the works of contemporary Christian writers. Irenæus has detailed their doctrines; and Epiphanius, who himself had been a Gnostic, relates their rites and practices. Besides these, several other fathers of the church give an account of the lives and doctrines of the sectaries of this class with whom they were personally acquainted: what we know of them, therefore, reposes on the undoubted evidence of venerable men, who were not likely to have been mistaken themselves, and had no conceivable motive to misinform others.

Some modern sceptics, it is true, who bear these holy men no good will, seek every occasion to throw discredit upon their testimony; accordingly, they represent the Gnostics, not as they are depicted by those who saw and knew them, but as men of high intellectual attainments, sublime in their views, rational in their opinions, and pure in their conversation; and they accuse those who entertain a different opinion of prejudice and incredulity. It seems, however, that there is no comparison, in point of value, between the plain and simple narratives of the ancient fathers, who had the means of being well acquainted with what they wrote, and the visions of modern philosophers, who pretend to discover reason in extravagance, and attempt to extract from absurd and incomprehensible mysticism the purest and loftiest religious system. Leaving, therefore, fragments which serve only to display the writer's ingenuity, and suffering ourselves to be guided by facts alone, we shall lay before the reader a brief sketch of the history and leading features of Gnosticism, as they are given by the simple and veracious writers of the early ages of the church; and we shall illustrate our observations by occasional references to certain gems and sculptured remains, which are the only monuments the Gnostics themselves have transmitted of their daring imaginations and licentious principles.*

The Gnostics were so called from a Greek word (*gnosis*) signifying *knowledge* or science; and they assumed that appellation in the self-sufficient and enthusiastic belief that they enjoyed a more intimate acquaintance with the divine nature, and a profounder insight into religious mysteries, than was vouchsafed to the rest of the Christian world. They were, almost without exception, of the Gentile race; and their principal founders seem to have been natives of Syria and Egypt, where the insinuating softness of a delicious climate disposes the mind to lazy contemplations, and the body, not unfrequently, to sensual enjoyments. The paths of error being various and infinite, the Gnostics were imperceptibly divided into more than fifty particular sects, of whom the most celebrated appear to have been the Basilidians, the Valentiniens, and the Marcianites. Each of these sects could boast of its bishops, its congregations, and its doctors; some had even their

* The writer takes this opportunity of expressing his obligations to his friend, the Rev. Dr. Walsh, to whose excellent "Dissertation on Ancient Coins and Medals" he is indebted for the most valuable portions of this essay. He believes, however, he has consulted some authorities that had escaped the Doctor's notice, and hopes he has succeeded in throwing additional light upon a subject of deep interest, both historical and religious.

martyrs. Their success was rapid and extensive ; they covered Egypt and the Lesser Asia, established themselves in Rome, and occasionally penetrated into the western provinces of the empire. They first became conspicuous in the second century after the death of the apostles, and under the reign of the emperor Hadrian ; they flourished during the third, and were extinguished, for the most part, in the fourth or fifth.

Overlooking for the present, the shades of difference by which the numerous Gnostic sects were distinguished from each other, we shall endeavour (previous to entering into a detailed account of their various heresies) to trace their origin, and give a general view of those opinions and principles in which all denominations seemed to agree. The oriental philosophy was the principal fountain from which they drew their errors. The rational soul, according to that philosophy, was imprisoned in corrupt matter, contrary to the will of the Supreme Being ; and the world was subject to the dominion of a number of evil genii, or malignant spirits. To liberate the soul from her thralldom, and emancipate the human race from the tyranny of these demons, the Eastern sages expected the coming of an extraordinary messenger from the Most High. When, therefore, some of these philosophers saw the wonders which Christ and his disciples wrought, and observed their beneficial effects upon mankind, they had no great difficulty in believing that he was the great champion whom they had been taught to look for. This supposition once admitted, they proceeded to wrest both the facts and the doctrines of the gospel into conformity with their oriental tenets, and in this manner they laid the foundation of the Gnostic system. Their notions concerning Jesus Christ were as follows. They considered him as the Son of God ; but they denied both his deity and his humanity—the former, because they identified him with the visionary deliverer of their Eastern superstition—the latter, because they held every thing corporeal to be intrinsically and essentially evil. It was inconsistent with their ideas of the human body to believe that so impure a tabernacle was prepared for a good being who came to destroy the empire of wicked spirits, and restore the souls of men into a state of union with the Great Source from which they emanated. It was a further result of their tenets with regard to matter that they rejected the doctrine of the resurrection, or the re-union of soul and body after death ; and the same extravagant opinion led them to regard marriage as a vicious and unholy institution. As matter was evil in its nature, so, according to the Gnostics, it was evil in its source ; the material world, in their system, was the creation of those bad genii who governed it ; and the direct consequence of this notion was that they denied the divine authority of the Old Testament, whose account of the beginning of things was so totally repugnant to their idle fictions. They even went so far as to view Moses, and the religion he taught, with abhorrence ; in the God of the Jews they could discover none of the features of the wise and omnipotent Father of the universe ; and, accordingly, they degraded him to a lower order of existences, sometimes even so low as the evil principle itself.

The moral doctrines of the Gnostics were of two kinds ; and those diametrically opposite to each other. The lives of one class were austere and abstinent ; they mortified and extenuated the body in order to purify and elevate the mind ; the other class maintained that there was no moral difference between human actions ; and, in conformity with this principle, they gave free course to their passions, and made religion itself minister to their sensual gratifications. These doctrines, apparently so opposite, had their origin in the same principle, operating on different characters and temperaments. The body being universally accounted the source and seat of evil, men of morose and stern dispositions sought to reduce and combat it, as the natural enemy of the soul ; while, on the other hand, persons of dissolute propensities were easily brought to believe that the deeds of the outward man had no relation whatever to the state of the inward, and that, consequently, the idea of moral restraint upon the former was absurd.

It may, perhaps, be questioned whether the Gnostics of the rigid or of the sensual school did most to prejudice the cause of Christianity in the eyes of the heathen world. It is the peculiar characteristic of the religion of the gospel, that, while it wages irreconcilable warfare with the irregular appetites and vicious propensities of our nature, it adapts itself with facility to social intercourse, prescribes

no severe habits, countenances no ascetic humours, but prefers the cheerful mood to the gloomy, and separates its followers, not from the joys of sense, but from their inordinate indulgence, not from the pleasures of the passing world, but from the entire surrender of the heart to their pursuit and to their enjoyment. The religion of the gospel is as far from being a code of austere discipline and rigid observances as it is from sanctioning the vices and passions of our corrupt nature.

We have said that, the Gnostics first acquired celebrity in the second century. Their first appearance, however, in ecclesiastical history belongs to an earlier date, and has been traced satisfactorily even so far back as the apostolic times. At the period when the gospel was first promulgated, the practice of magic was general in every part of the civilized world. The popular creed peopled all nature, "earth, air, flood, and fire," with certain influences and powers, which could be managed and swayed, for good or evil, by the proficient in the use of spells and charms, mystical sounds and emblems. The Egyptians were proverbial for cherishing these wild fancies; and we find, in the Acts of the Apostles, that the study of "*curious arts*" was common amongst the inhabitants of the most polished city in the East. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the first converts to the cross should have corrupted the purity of the new creed with a profane mixture of their ancient habits and ideas. Accordingly, we read that the apostles themselves found it necessary to guard their disciples against the communion of such persons, cautioning them to avoid "*vain babblings*," and to beware of "*oppositions of science falsely so called*."* In the same epistle, St. Paul speaks of "*doctrines of devils*," and warns Timothy not to give heed to "*old wives fables*:" so that already, it would appear, had the sacred truths of the gospel been adulterated with the fantastic dreams of a visionary philosophy, and the example been given of those monstrous departures from sound doctrine which distracted and disgraced the succeeding ages of the church.

* 1 Timothy vi 20. The word rendered "*science*," in this passage, is *gnosis*—the same above alluded to as the origin of the appellation, Gnostic.

To be continued..

LETTER FROM J. M. GRANT.

Elder W. Woodruff,—Beloved Brother in the kingdom of God, I hope you will forgive me for not writing to you ere this. You know it is impossible for me to forget you, though I confess my negligence, yet all within me bears witness that brother Woodruff has been remembered at the family altar, and before the congregation of the Saints, when the hour came to offer our oblations to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ our elder brother.

Dear brother, you are gratefully remembered by the Saints in this city. We rejoice to hear of your prosperity in your almost boundless field of labour. I have received both of your interesting letters, and also the minutes of your general conference. While reading the same my soul was filled with joy, for a moment I seemed to be with you, with the velocity of light, my thoughts crossed the briny deep, and traced you in your various meanderings through England and Scotland, the land of my father's nativity.

I also viewed with much satisfaction the course pursued by all my brethren who went from this land made dear to us by the sacred covenants the Lord made to brother Joseph, our martyred lawgiver and renowned prophet, "that this land should be our everlasting inheritance." I might, dear brother, dwell much on past scenes through which we have past together on the land of Zion, where sleep many we dearly love; but I forbear making any further allusions to the scenes you remember well.

That I may comply with your request, viz., give you all the news I can, either from Nauvoo, or from the east, west, north, or south, I will leave the news from Nauvoo for the last, as that will be best of all. The work of the Lord has prospered in Philadelphia since you were here, some twenty or thirty new members have been baptized, our congregations have greatly increased in numbers, the Spirit

of the Lord is in our midst, therefore our union is strong. We are doing all in our power to aid in completing the Temple and the Nauvoo House. Prayers are offered without ceasing by day and night, that we may have the privilege of fulfilling the commandments, that the blessings long-looked for may come upon us in the house of the Lord. In the city of New York the cause is onward, new members are joining the church, all alive on the subject of building up Nauvoo, the city of Joseph, and finishing the Temple. Elders Parley P. Pratt, J. S. Brannan are going a-head with printing and circulating truth. Elder Pratt has thrown a flood of light throughout all this part of the vineyard to the joy of many Saints.

Boston is blessed with more Saints than any other city in the eastern states. Elder Willard Snow has charge there, under the direction of elder Pratt; that branch I think numbers between three and four hundred members. In all the Eastern States the Saints are well-united, being willing to listen to the counsel of the twelve, and pay their tithings as the Lord has said. Many have emigrated to Nauvoo to help in all things to carry out the measures of brothers Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

The northern sections of the states the almost innumerable branches of the church are on the increase, notwithstanding the elders in general are called to Nauvoo. The interior of the different states are now beholding hundreds of their best citizens leaving their homes to locate with the Saints, and help to build the Temple of our God.

From the south the news is cheering to me and all the Saints: you are aware of my labours in South Western Virginia and North Carolina. Before I left there I organized a conference of two hundred members, consisting of seven churches in seven different counties; the last account shows an increase of over 150 since I left the field.

The accounts received from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee, go to shew that the south keeps not back. The news from Canada proves that the north is giving up also as the prophet said. The heaven is working in all North America. The bread will soon be ready to bake. The wood has caught fire, and the oven is heating fast.

Nauvoo, the "City of Joseph," last but not least, is rising in the majesty of the God, of Joseph, and Hyrum. Her charter is the law of God. Her officers the Twelve Apostles, and their assistants, which are all the spiritual authorities of the church and kingdom. Her strength is all power in heaven and on earth. Her banner is love. The wisdom of her inhabitants reaches to heaven; before them the wicked tremble. I feel happy brother Woodruff that I can inform you in truth that the dark cloud which hung over Nauvoo, a few months ago, has burst asunder, and never, no, never did the sun of peace and prosperity shine on the churches as at present. The earth brings forth her strength; the Saints in Hancock county, and the adjacent ones, will this season raise grain enough to support half the whole state. In many other parts of the state the frost has destroyed almost the entire crop of summer grain; many of our enemies already have to beg grain of the Saints. The Temple, I suppose, is nearly covered by this time, the work for the inside is in a rapid state of completion. One hundred hands are now at work at the Nauvoo House. The brick is all ready for the same, timber, &c., &c. The roof will be put on this fall; but you know they will build so fast, with so little means that, when both houses are completed, the debt for the same will be large indeed. But the commandment will be fulfilled and the blessings descend on the true hearted Saints of the Lord. My soul magnifies the name of the Lord for all these precious things.

The murderers of brothers Joseph and Hyrum have been acquitted by the mob jury; they are now in the hands of the Devil for destruction in the due time of the Lord.

The last news from Nauvoo is, that nine of the Twelve were there in good health and spirits. I learn that elders B. Young, H. C. Kimball, J. Taylor, N. Richards, G. A. Smith, O. Pratt, O. Hyde, W. Smith, John E. Page, Amasa Lyman, are all in Nauvoo at present, busy night and day giving counsel to the whole church as the spirit directs.

There are thirty-one quorums of the seventies completely organized under their

respective presidents as the law directs. I hope to see you soon after our first Pentecost if the Lord will. My wife joins with me in sending our love and respects to you and sister Woodruff.

Your brother in the kingdom of peace.

Philadelphia, July 12th, 1845.

JEDEDIAH M. GRANT.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM ELDER HIRAM CLARK.

Dear Br. Ward,—* * * * *

—Having taken coach, May 1st, at half-past nine o'clock, A. M., for Staffordshire Potteries, the field of my labour for the time-being, as President over the Staffordshire Conference, agreeably to the appointment by the General Conference at Manchester, we arrived in Hanley the same day, took lodgings with brother Thomas Yeomans, where they showed us every kindness possible, for which, I pray the Lord to bless them temporally and spiritually. After tarrying a few days in Hanley and Burslem, I took a trip out to the different branches of the conference, which took me about six weeks to get round them all. In some places I found them in rather a lukewarm state, and some of the members seldom, or ever, attending meetings. I exhorted them to meet often together, and, as the apostle said, "not to forget the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some was;" for, in so doing, I told them they would lose the spirit and power of truth. When I first came here there seemed to be an unfriendly spirit in the minds of many of the Saints, but I believe it is mostly gone, with the exception of showing itself now and then with a few. We have had, in some cases, to cut off dead branches, in order to give room for others to be adopted in; so that on the whole, I have not been altogether idle since I came here.

I have baptized three new ones and one that had been cut off, which makes four, since our last quarterly conference; and I now say, that the spirit of reconciliation seems to prevail with the Saints at present, while the spirit of love and union attends our meetings, and the hearts of the Saints rejoice in their assemblies.

I have organized the sisters in Hanley, Burslem, and Lane End, so that they are contributing their penny a week towards the Temple, and the brethren seem willing to pay their tithing, and that it should be applied for procuring a bell for the Temple, agreeably to the request in the STAR by brother Woodruff.

I am much pleased as well as my brethren, with the subject-matter of the late STARS. May the Lord crown you with success, is the prayer of your fellow-labourer in the Gospel,

HIRAM CLARK.

LETTER FROM DANIEL HALL.

Dear Brother Woodruff,—Agreeably to your request, and the counsel of our beloved president, elder Milton Holmes, I cheerfully improve the present opportunity by communicating a few lines to you, in order that you may know how the work of the Lord is rolling on in this part of the vineyard.

I would just state that the work met with much opposition when it was first introduced into this town, and ever since there have been a many engaged in belieing, slandering, and misrepresenting those who have been, and who are still engaged in proclaiming the principles of truth. The result has been, that the work has been almost at a stand in this place; the seed which was sown, to all appearance, fell upon bad ground, so that no fruits of our labour then appeared; but I now feel happy to state, that since the death of our beloved prophet and patriarch, the aspect of things has changed for the better. Beforetime we were very few in number, and had to meet in an old room, where the people would not come to hear us; but now we have a large, commodious, and comfortable room, and our number has in a few months increased from 26 to 92. Beforetime, the Saints of Bury only took four or five STARS per month, but I have now got twenty-five names down, to take them twice a month.

Beforetime, the people would not come to hear us, nor cease to speak evil of us; but now many have seen the folly of speaking evil of what they did not understand, and flock

from all parts of the town to our meeting room, to hear the truth for themselves. Some believe and are baptized, and others are convinced, and cease to speak evil of us.

Beforetime, the ministers of the gospel (so called) did not think us worthy of their notice, because, said they, if we let them alone, and take no notice of them, they will fall to the ground, and under these convictions, they told their members to have nothing to do with us, and warned them not to come near our meeting room, for if they did, they would be in danger of being deceived; and they have been living in joyful anticipation of one day beholding the few that had been baptized fall away, and the work be entirely stopped; and when they heard of the death of the prophet, they thought that they would soon realize their desires, therefore their motto was:—let them alone a little longer! But instead of having their wishes gratified, the Saints had the pleasure of seeing their numbers more than doubled in a few weeks. This has made them open their eyes, and think that something should be done to put a stop to us, for they then found it out, that while they were silent upon the subject, we were adding to our numbers; therefore they took a different course, and began to oppose us from their pulpits; but this plan proved to be worse than the other, for they sent the people to hear us, and some of them believed, and were baptized; therefore they learned that if they were silent, we prospered, and if they opposed us, we prospered the more.

Before I close, I would just say that I have now been in the church a little over three years, during which time I have suffered a little for the truth's sake, and have seen this branch of the church in a very different position to that in which it is found at present, for never were the prospects so cheering as now: our numbers are rapidly increasing, and likely to do so. Within the last few months, we have baptized sixty persons into the new and everlasting covenant, sixteen of the above number have been baptized since the last conference, held in Manchester on the 6th of April.

Elder Milton Holmes was here last week, and organized this branch in respect to the British and American Commercial Joint Stock Company, when names were given in to the amount of between forty and fifty. The rest of the time was devoted by brother Holmes to the teaching of principles of truth, which caused our hearts to rejoice, and praise God that ever we heard the sound of the Gospel, and that we accepted of salvation on the plan laid down in the same. We had a good meeting and the Lord blessed us, and it is my prayer that the work may roll on, that the Saints may be built up in their most holy faith, and at last inherit those blessings which God has in reserve for them that love him.

Just as I was finishing this letter I was called to go down to the waters to baptize three young men, making in all nineteen since last conference.

Your's in the covenant,

Spout House, near Bury.

DANIEL HALL.

CONFERENCES.

LIVERPOOL.—The Liverpool Quarterly Conference was held in the Music Hall, on Sunday the 20th July. The meeting was called to order at half-past ten, a.m., and elder Stratton, the President of the Conference called to the chair; elder Cantwell, chosen clerk. The total amount of members represented in conference was 730, including quorum of twelve, 1; high priests, 3; elders, 31; priests, 43; teachers, 21; deacons, 14. One elder, two priests, and one teacher were nominated and ordained. The reports from the conference generally were of a very encouraging nature; sixty-nine having been baptized since last quarterly conference.

J. A. STRATTON, President.

J. S. CANTWELL, Clerk.

EDINBURGH.—We have also received the minutes of the Edinburgh Conference, held in Mary's Chapel, High Street, on the 27th of July last. Elder John Banks, presiding, and elder G. P. Waugh, acting as clerk. Eleven branches were represented, containing 405 members, including 1 high priest, 14 elders, 19 priests, 7 teachers, and 4 deacons. 39 have been received by baptism since last conference, and 6 by letter. Two were ordained elders, and two to the office of priest. The condition of the churches generally in the conference is much improved, and under the superintendence of elder John Banks, promises ere long to occupy no obscure situation amongst the successful conferences of the land. The whole proceedings were conducted harmoniously, and the Saints were dismissed at the close of the

meetings in the spirit of joy and peace. Our friends must excuse us in not giving the full detail of the proceedings in all their peculiar originality as forwarded to us, as our space is too limited for it.

Latter-day Saints' Millennium Star.

AUGUST 15, 1845.

WE are much pleased with the letter from elder Grant, which we have published this month, and have to add, that all additional news which we have received, confirms the same.

Let the Saints be diligent and faithful in exerting themselves to assist our brethren in the West in carrying out the great purposes of God, by fulfilling his commandments in building the houses which he has commanded his servants to erect.

We would wish to intimate one principle of importance to the Saints, in relation to their tithings; which is, that the act of tithing, being a portion of obedience for which individuals are responsible to God alone, no persons are therefore compelled to make payments of the same to the officers of their own district exclusively, but may immediately transmit the same to the presidency in Liverpool, when of any amount; while at the same time we would give every encouragement to the secretaries and treasurers who are receiving instalments, as also to those who contribute the same.

We wish also to state, that any contributions for a bell and clock for the temple, will be considered as contributions for the temple, inasmuch as they will be parts and parcels of the same, and that all future contributions for the temple will be applied for procuring the above, until a sufficiency be realized; and we trust that the fact of providing a mouth-piece and time-piece for the temple of the Lord, will be an additional stimulus to the British Saints in this glorious cause.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

The *Magrai Tyiaret* ship from Trebizond, and the *Scutari* ship for the port of Constantinople, got in contact with each other on the night of the 11th ult., about twenty miles from the entrance of the Bosphorus, and in about fifteen minutes the former sunk, and about 130 passengers were drowned. The latter returned into port in a crippled state, after throwing about 200 bales of manufactures overboard.

DREADFUL COLLIERY EXPLOSION.—LOSS OF TWENTY-EIGHT LIVES.—An explosion of fire-damp, by which twenty-eight human beings lost their lives, took place on Saturday last, at a colliery belonging to Mr. Thomas Powell, situated at Crombach, about three miles distant from the village of Aberdare, and six from Merthyr Tydvil. It occurred about eleven o'clock, and was attended with a violent concussion of the earth. There were at the time from 150 to 200 human beings, men and boys, in the pit. The air in the pit, after the explosion, was so noxious, that it was a considerable time ere any person could venture to seek for the missing men. But such is the devotion, such the spirit and courage of these poor working colliers, that they were to be seen going into the pit without the least hesitation to seek their missing fellow-workmen. The risk which they incurred may be imagined, from many of them having fainted when proceeding towards the workings; yet others were pushing on and working, undauntedly, hoping to find some one alive and in need of assistance. The number of persons killed by this frightful calamity was twenty-eight. An inquest on the bodies was sworn on Monday, at the Boot Inn, Aberdare, before Wm. Davies, Esq., of Merthyr Tydvil, coroner for the upper division of Glamorganshire, and adjourned to Tuesday. The following are the names and ages of the sufferers:—David Jenkins, single man, aged 37; Richard Morris, ditto, aged 30; Howel Williams, ditto, aged 28, and Rees Williams, ditto, aged 24, brothers; Joseph Phillips, ditto, aged 15; Thomas Evans, married, aged 35; Evan Lewis, single, 19; George Thomas, ditto, aged 33; William Williams, married, aged 34; David Jones, ditto, aged 34; David Jones, single, aged 32; James James, ditto, aged 23; Howel David, ditto, aged 20; John Jones, ditto, aged 19;

David Morgan, ditto, aged 21; Thomas Smith, ditto, aged 19; John Edwards, married, aged 35, and W. Edwards, aged 9, father and son; James Thomas, widower, aged 44, and David Thomas, aged 10, father and son; William Llewelyn, single, aged 19; William Evans, ditto, aged 30; Thomas Davies, widower, aged 78; Evan Thomas, single, aged 14; John Jones, ditto, aged 17; John Evans, married, aged 32, and David Evans, aged 9, father and son, and Nicholas Evans, a compound fracture of the thigh, a fracture of the arm, and a portion of the jaw-bone, and several teeth broken—not expected to live. Our Merthyr correspondent says only one body was taken out on Saturday, thirteen on Sunday, eight on Monday morning, and the remaining six by two o'clock on Monday afternoon. Five only of the men were married, leaving, perhaps, only from six to eight children behind them, the rest being single. The result of the coroner's inquest, which sat till nearly eight o'clock on Tuesday evening, was a verdict of accidental death.

THE RESURRECTION.

THE ANGEL OF THE SEPULCHRE.

HE IS NOT HERE, BUT HE IS RISEN!

Gone beyond the world's control—

Upward, from the body's prison,

To the regions of the soul.

Time nor chance can longer bind

Jesus,—Monarch of mankind!

Dusk was upon Sion's hill,

Night was in the vale below;

All thy myriad hearts were still—

City, doomed to matchless woe!

O'er her more than clouds were spread—

Thunders, that shall wake the dead.

Madness there had done its deed!

There, in dreams, the haughty scribe,

Murderer for his vanished creed,

Launched the zealot's bitter gibe:

There, with more than aspic tongue,

His coils around the victim flung.

There the sullen hypocrite—

Man of blood, the Pharisee—

Darkener of the temple's light,

Ruthless binder of the free—

In dreams ran o'er the life of guile,

And wore the double traitor's smile.

There the men of Sanhedrim,

Wrapt in old pontific pride,

With no enemy but Him

Who, to save them, bled and died—

Ere his hallowed blood was cold,

Grasped, in dreams, the Roman gold.

There the furious multitude,

Raising in their sleep the yell,

"Be upon our heads his blood!"—

Watched his heart-drops as they fell:

Each triumphant in his pain,

As if his direst foe was slain.

Man! are those thy vanities?

Those the triumphs of the earth?

If the spirits of the skies

Could be stirred to bitter mirth,

Thou and all thy pride were born

Things of endless scoff and scorn.

Yet, oh woman's heart!—'twas thine

Through that night to watch and weep!

Touched with love and grief divine,

Still she gazed on Sion's steep,

Till the trembling morn-star gave
Light to lead her to the grave.

Fearless of the Roman spear,
Fearless of the Jewish chain,
Through the valley, dim and drear,
Trode her steps of toil and pain;
Though, before her, Calvary,
Darkened with th' accursed tree!

Round her lay the guilty dead,
Piled and festering from all time;
There, by endless victims fed,
Emblem of the throne of crime,
On the pilgrim's shrinking gaze
Flared Gehennah's livid blaze.

Onward still, in faith and love,
Mary sought her Master's tomb;
Lit by wisdom from above,
What to her was pain or gloom?
Life was death, death victory—
She had seen her Master die!

Now was reached the lowly cave,
Where the dead ne'er lay before:
King, omnipotent to save!

When our age of guilt is o'er,
What hosannas shall be sung,
Where thy tortured form was flung!

On her eyeballs burst a flame,
Brighter than the lightning's spire;
From the grave the splendour came;
On it sat a shape of fire,
With the angel-crown and plume,
Guardian of the Saviour's tomb.

One of the high cherubim
Which surround the FATHER's throne,
Chaunting day and night the hymn,
"King and God, thy will be done!"
Shapes that with a touch could sweep
All earth's kingdoms to the deep!

Empire beamed upon his brow,
Power was in his lifted hand,
In his cheeks' celestial glow
Loveliness, serene and grand;
But his flashing glance severe,
Shewed the blood-avenger there.

"He is risen," the cherub said;
"Death is slain, and life is come;
Seek the dead among the dead;
Light has burst on mankind's gloom:
In the grave no longer bound—
From this hour your King is crowned.

"Go, proclaim it to the world!
Mercy has been found for man;
Satan from his throne is hurled!—
Where the Saviour's heart-drops ran,
There shall God's high altar rise,
Lit with glory from the skies.

"Go, proclaim it to the world!
Though its crimes were red as blood,
O'er it is a wing unfurled:
Though its soul were guilt-imbrued,
From the rock a fount shall spring,
Deathless balm be on that wing.